



THE MERRITT CONNECTION

President's Message



The Fall holidays begin and you realize how quickly the Fall semester has come and gone. Our students only have a couple of weeks before they begin their final exams. I witnessed some students getting ready to take exams before the Thanksgiving holiday in the S Building. Consequently, this means that some faculty will be spending a portion of their holiday grading papers. As you recall, the responsibilities of teaching are continuous yet rewarding.

This year, I'm pleased to see more members of Merritt family assuming additional work toward a sanction-free status with ACCJC. A *sense of urgency* has been reinforced at every opportunity or gathering we've had with faculty and classified. Our amazing Accreditation Core team has persisted with maintaining a continuous momentum toward completion of
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A Truly Grand Opening: Celebrating the Barbara Lee Science and Allied Health Center

November 6 was truly an historic day for Merritt College. On that beautiful fall afternoon, hundreds of guests from the college, the District, and around the Bay Area and beyond came to honor Congresswoman Barbara Lee and the new Barbara Lee Science and Allied Health Center.

The 110,000-square-foot building was completed "on time and on budget," according to Dr. Sadiq Ikharo, and Congresswoman Lee couldn't have been more proud. "It was a labor of love," she said to the enthusiastic crowd of faculty, staff, and students, friends and family, and the colleagues she has worked with and supported over the years. "This beautiful center is preparing people for jobs that don't even exist yet, that's why it is so cutting edge. It's an honor to have the name Barbara Lee on it."



Dignitaries spoke throughout the ceremony, including Trustee Meredith Brown, who said, "The person we are honoring is a champion on the war on poverty because education is one of the cornerstones of that war and what our battle is all about; Chancellor Jowell Laguerre said, "It's wonderful to dedicate this facility to Barbara Lee for her contributions to the Peralta colleges, the State of California, the U.S.A., and the world; and Merritt President Norma Ambriz-Galaviz said, "The center will focus on STEM education and ensuring access for students to have a chance to become innovators. A true village came together to build this center."



Congresswoman Lee was also presented with a portrait of herself (above) and given a tour of the building after the ceremony. (For photos of the event and other media coverage, go to www.merritt.edu/wp/blog/barbara-lee-2/.)

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the required work. Many individuals have stepped-up and volunteered! Thank you for caring.

The task of reaffirmation is a journey toward a student-centered learning environment with institutional effectiveness and continuous quality improvement. We intend to show the evidence of planning and meaningful participation. We are currently in the last phase of our Program Review process where volunteers, referred to as the Validation Team, are reviewing the various Program Review Plans submitted. This is something new at Merritt College and several individuals volunteered to serve and have gone beyond the call of duty in order to meet the deadlines.

On a related topic, we completed the last of our faculty hiring for Fall 2015 with most of our hires from categorical SSSP funding. We are beginning the faculty prioritization process for 2016 during the month of December. Representatives from Merritt College are currently advocating for a District-funded classified prioritization process through their participation on the PBC (District Planning and Budget Council).

The next six months will be purposeful and eventful. Merritt College is making significant steps toward becoming a learning and teaching institution that assesses its desired outcomes by documenting results. Our plan is to show the continuous increase of assessment and how we use the results in our planning for the benefits of our students' learning.

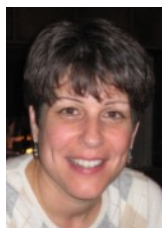
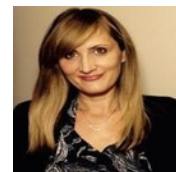
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Welcome to Merritt's Newest Employees!



Dr. Wise Allen, former chief administrator of the Peralta District who previously served as CEO of several of the Peralta Colleges, including Merritt, returned as Interim Vice President of Instruction to assist with the instructional administrative demands from the various academic and career technical programs.

Rachel Antrobus joins us as the Interim Dean of Academic Pathways (Division II) after serving as the Strategic Partnerships Manager for the Career Ladders Project (CLP) for the past 2-1/2 years, where she supported the development of partnerships between K-12 and Community College districts.



Dr. Rosemary Delia comes to Merritt as Interim Dean of Workforce Development & Applied Sciences (Division II) with more than 25 years of instructional and administrative experience on both the secondary and postsecondary levels. Among other positions, she has served as Director of Chabot College's first satellite campus, Chabot College-San Leandro Center.

Berenise Herrera Rodriguez is the new Executive Assistant to the president. After graduating from SF State, she served as an intern to Barbara Lee in Washington, D.C., then District Representative for State Senate President Pro Tempore Don Perata. She subsequently served as Program Manager for the Latino Issues Forum, before joining Merritt in 2010 as the Child Development Professional Development Coordinator funded by the First 5 Grant.



Say hello to more of your new co-workers . . .

Jose Salceda, as General Counselor-Puente, is providing counseling to Puente students as well as Merritt's general student population in P-108.

Mary Rose Ciddio, as DSPS Counselor, has accepted a full-time counselor position after serving as adjunct, and will be housed in R-109.

Stefani DeVito, as General Counselor-Veterans, returning to Merritt to work with our veteran students in R-105.

Ernesto Nery, as Financial Aid Supervisor, starting December 7, will be housed in R-113A.

President's Message

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It is definitely extra work and at times challenging. To quote G. Hinckley, "Without hard work, nothing grows but weeds." I see many more individuals working hard to reduce the weeds at Merritt.

I was reminded that hard work and determination shaped our nation's history. In my recent visit to Washington, D.C., the work and struggles of our leaders were reflected in their monuments.

Thomas Jefferson promoted "**knowledge as the common property of all mankind;**"



Franklin Roosevelt stated, "**The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today;**" and **Martin Luther King, Jr.** affirmed

to all that, "**Faith is taking the first step, even when you don't see the whole staircase.**"

Hence, reflect on your 2015 experiences and contemplate the 2016 staircase of Merritt College and know that you have a chance to participate and make a difference. We are only a phone call away.

May you enjoy the remaining holidays with loved ones and know that we truly appreciate the contributions you make to Merritt College.

Happy holidays and happy new year!

Dr. Norma Ambriz-Galaviz
President



Chancellor Meets with Merritt Community

Students (above) gather around Chancellor Jowel Laguerre after an easygoing forum of questions and answers during his visit to Merritt last month. Along with the student session, the Chancellor spent the afternoon in hourlong informational forums with welcoming faculty, classified staff, and administrators who also had the opportunity for discussion in an open, honest, and comfortable setting.

SS&E Speaker Series Brings Native American Presentation

Eddie Madril, an award-winning dancer and educator and founder of Sewam American Indian Dance, shared his fascinating native culture with Merritt on 11/24 as part of the Student Success & Equity Speaker Series sponsored by the SS&E Committee and the Office of Student Activities and Campus Life. Final speakers are 12/1 and 12/8.



SLOAC News: Assessment of ILOs

by Jennifer Shanoski



November 13 found many Merritt College faculty engaged in a luncheon focused on the assessment of Merritt College's Communication Institutional Learning Outcome (ILO). Institutional outcomes describe the skills and abilities that our students will have when they leave our institution with a degree or certificate, or to transfer to a four-year university. The communication outcome is: *Communicate with clarity and precision using oral, nonverbal, and/or written language, expressing an awareness of audience, situation, and purpose.*

At the Nov. 13 event, faculty learned how to use a common rubric to assess their students' achievement in the area of communication. Appropriate assignments and an approach for scoring were both discussed. Participating faculty are now charged with gathering data, scoring their assignments, and reflecting on their results. A luncheon to discuss the results is scheduled for December 14, 2015 in the Student Lounge, and a flex day presentation is being organized for January.



Carlos McLean Retires After Years of Helping At-Risk Students Find Success

If Carlos McLean had been better at chemistry, he would have followed his dream to be a veterinarian. But luckily for thousands of at-risk youth and adults who became successful despite all odds, science was not his thing.

Instead, armed with a bachelor's degree in psychology from UC Davis and eventually a master's in counseling psychology, McLean found his calling: helping troubled youth, middle-schoolers, adult job trainees, and college students to believe in themselves when no one else did.

Next month McLean will retire after a long, 45-year career. He says it was a tough decision to leave a profession that has brought him so much satisfaction. But, at 66, he also feels fulfilled by the contributions he's made.

After his first few jobs as a juvenile probation officer and a counselor for both a middle-school and a job-training program, he zigzagged among community colleges gaining more and more experiences. At different times, he was an EOPS counselor at City College of San Francisco; psychology instructor, Dean of Instruction, and VP of Student Services at Laney; and instructor, counselor, and project director at Merritt.

"Each job helped me grow and develop and increased my expertise by working with people of all ages and backgrounds," says McLean. "I call myself a lifelong learner because I learn from who I serve. It's been both rewarding and humbling."

It was as a counselor at Merritt College where he felt he could help the most and where he will finish his tenth year when he retires. "This is the real world," he says. "There are so many obstacles for some of these students to overcome, including homelessness and incarceration, and many of them don't think they can even pass one class.

"It's challenging to learn how to help them," says McLean, "but it's just what I do, I don't think about it. I say, 'We have something to do, let's get to it.'"

In 2008, McLean and others became part of a program that would do something to dramatically change the lives of many students at Merritt. With a 2-year, \$1.1 million grant from the Department of Education, he served as Project Director of the Maximum Achievement Project (MAP) designed to increase the graduation and matriculation rates of African-American males and other at-risk students.

"It was a very successful program," says McLean, who credits colleagues Audrey Trotter and Anika Toussant-Jackson for writing the grant. "Working with Ernie Crutchfield and Johnny Burks, both counselors in the program, I was able to work with students who needed guidance the most, and then they were like birds who took off from there."

With close to 300 African-American males during the duration of the program, McLean says, "at one point it seemed like everyone wanted to be part of MAP, so we branched out and took anyone who wanted to be included. We said, 'We will make it work.'"

One of the early supporters of the program was Congresswoman Barbara Lee who ultimately invited McLean to give a presentation about MAP at the annual Congressional Black Caucus in Washington D.C., a crowning glory for the program.

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Carlos McLean *(continued)*

“It was the first time we had been invited, and I went with then-Merritt President Dr. Bobby Adams and Eric Gravenberg, who was a consultant for MAP, and was able to bring two students who told their stories to a packed audience. There weren’t many dry eyes in the house. It was a beautiful thing, just a wonderful experience, and the highlight of my career.”

Recognition of his contributions spread far and wide, eventually getting the attention of the editors of the national *Essence Magazine* where McLean was interviewed and featured in its March 2010 issue among the “Best and Brightest” educators in the nation. He excitedly points to a copy of the magazine cover on his office wall, noting that President Barack Obama and his wife Michelle are on the cover. “I was floored,” he says. “I had people calling me from all over the country, people who knew me when I was a kid. I couldn’t believe it. It was really something to be proud of.”

Though MAP ended because of a lack of funding, the dreams for many of the students did not. Of the students who gave the presentations, one received an academic scholarship and graduated from Howard University. The other MAP student, who had barely graduated from high school, ended up receiving a full academic scholarship to the University of California, Berkeley, and recently graduated. Other students, says McLean proudly, are going to law school or to work on MBAs, while some have landed in lucrative careers.

“I run into them all the time. Sometimes they recognize my voice in a crowd, and they’ll say, ‘McLean is that you?’” he says. “I’ve seen them in stores, at childcare picking up their kids, I’ve even seen them on TV being interviewed. It’s gratifying to know I played a role in their lives.”

In his own life, McLean has raised three children whom he is also proud of: Jason, 39, who works for Apple; Troy, 36, director of a Sylvan Learning Center, and Jene´, 26, an independent film producer who also works in retail. “I always talked to them about college, so they knew that going to school and finishing was not an option but expected,” he says. “And they also knew that they had to share me with my students.”

McLean says they didn’t mind because “they were very proud of the work I was doing. In fact, when Jene´ was in college, she was always referring me to her friends who were on the verge of getting into trouble, and then they would refer me to their friends until I had to say, ‘Stop!’”

But even in retirement, he won’t stop. He says he will always find ways to help students in need. He’s also planning to travel with his wife, Kathryn, and spend time with the rest of his family, including his 95-year-old mother.

So what will life be like without Merritt? Though McLean will miss his colleagues very much, he will miss his students even more. In fact, he is dreading to have to give them the news about his departure.

“I love Merritt,” says McLean. “I’ve had a chance to interact with wonderful students and see them become successful in ways that they never thought they would. When I see someone getting acknowledged, I remember when they walked through the door and they didn’t think they could do anything. And now there they were strutting across the stage with the world in their hands.

For me, there’s no greater accomplishment!”



Guest Feature

Looking at Costa Rica Under A Microscope

by Dr. Gisele Giorgi

A microscopy instructor reflects on taking her students out of the classroom and introducing them to a whole new world of science.



I'm always a little off kilter when I get back from Costa Rica. Why do people look at me weirdly when I say "Hola?" Why does everyone seem to speak only one language? Where's the jungle outside my door? Where did all the frogs go? I know this is my house, but is it? It seems so odd. Why is everyone in this giant supermarket so grumpy? Has the sky always been that color?

Each year, before the trip to Costa Rica with my students, I ask myself: why all this fuss? Why do we take all the time and expense, in this day and age of climate change, to fly so far away in a polluting, costly (albeit fun) airplane? Why not do something in our own backyards? We have plenty of gorgeous nature, after all. Then, each year, once I'm there, I remember. I get captivated by the charm of Costa Rica. The abundance of plants and animals and bugs and water. The relaxed, friendly people. The pure air, pure water, fresh food. The magic of it all. And the fruit!

So, here's one answer to why I travel so far: it's good for me, as well as for our students, to be thrown into a very different environment. I'm surely not the first to figure that out, but somehow, being a very normal human, I keep forgetting that lesson. So each dose helps. It's a bit like a vaccine for my ongoing case of the blinders. Each piece of Costa Rica that soaks in helps to develop me more fully. Travel calls to and strengthens wonderful sides of me that are undernourished in my current home, delightful as it is.

It takes me at least a week to re-orient myself to life in California. But I think the Costa Rica immersion lingers in me, more so each time I visit. An ever more solid piece of me recognizes and rejoices when I come across an "hola." I still think bats are cute now, even back in the U.S.A. On a hot day, I remember how the breeze felt on the wide Tarcoles river, especially at the point where it meets the ocean and you see water all around you. When somebody is being charming and pushy, and putting themselves in danger, I think back to the wild coati who was determined to board our bus. When I'm struggling with my immediate world, I can remember the bat I held. He was so clumsy in the weird world of our lab, but, once able to fly away, he was so full of power in the air. And then there's those red-eyed tree frog embryos: they all blithely developed feathery gills and beating hearts, while under a microscope in our lab. Fortunately, they were still attached to their original leaf, and got to finish out their growth in a lovely pond.

For many of our students, our college is a truly foreign land. It is an opportunity for a journey of transformation, for growth through a fresh perspective. Even for the most experienced of students, those who have visited the country called "classroom" many times, there can still be magic each time. Any journey, no matter how often we think we've made it, can be full of surprises, new struggles, new connections and joys. As teachers, we get to be the welcoming, enthusiastic hosts and tour guides, native to the country, but still discovering it more ourselves everyday. As the popular quote on Facebook (attributed to Alexandra Trenfor) says "The best teachers show us where to look, but not what to see." How can we help our students have a great vacation this semester?

Oh, and, this summer, Mexicans got me hooked on Facebook, but that's another story. One I hope to bring to you next year. When we travel with students to the Yucatan and partner with Mexicans to describe the biology of an underground river, then work with a Mayan village cooperative to set up ecotourism. It's a big world out there. And inside.